



Aalborg Universitet

AALBORG UNIVERSITY
DENMARK

UrbanTransformation

Laursen, Lea Louise Holst

Publication date:
2009

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication from Aalborg University](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Laursen, L. L. H. (2009). *UrbanTransformation*. Paper presented at UPE8 - PARALLEL PATTERNS OF URBAN GROWTH AND DECLINE -Sustainability Issues and Challenges for Spatial Planning in 21st Century Cities and Regions, Kaiserslautern, Germany.

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal -

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us at vbn@aub.aau.dk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Urban Transformation

Lea Holst Laursen
Urban Design Research Group
Department of Architecture and Design
Aalborg University
Østerågade 6
DK-9000 Aalborg
Denmark
llan@aod.aau.dk

ABSTRACT: Due to the economical and political changes marked by globalization, neo-liberalism and, post-industrialism a changed spatial configuration is emerging in which an increased division is taking place, into on the one hand, economical and demographical growing urban areas, where the urban fabric is being concentrated, and on the other, into declining urban areas that experience a dilution of the urban fabric and a de-concentration of people and capital. This gives an uneven spatial geography where some places are becoming nodal points in the global society and others are left behind. But the urban situation of concentration and de-concentration is also closely connected where there is a dynamic relation between the two. Decline might in some cases even be seen as an aspect of growth, where the growth of some places influence the decline in others. With this approach the urban fabric can, therefore, best be described as a conglomerate of greater and smaller urban concentrations living in the same organism. In this conglomerate there are build and open spaces as well as urban growth and urban decline. This corresponds with present urban theory that turns the back on a concentric understanding of the urban; having a city center with a surrounding periphery. Instead a poly-nuclear approach where the urban world is a structure of enclaves connected through networks is found suitable (Nielsen 2001; Flusty and Dear 1999).

Against this background this paper will explore the concept of *urban transformation* as a way of understanding the dynamic relations between growth and decline.

1. Introduction

Contemporary urbanity can among others be characterized as both growing and declining. On the one hand, a concentration of the urban into highly urbanized nodal points is happening and on the other a de-concentration of the urban fabric in declining territories is taking place. Further, tendencies are pointing towards an increased differentiation between growing and declining areas and furthermore, some tendencies point toward a larger number of declining areas, caused by a number of structural changes such as the growing globalization and a shift towards an increased neo-liberalization.

This urban situation of concentration and de-concentration is not only happening at the same time they are also closely connected where there is a dynamic relation between the two. Decline might in some cases be seen as an aspect of growth, where the growth of some places influence the decline in others. With this approach the urban fabric can, therefore, best be described as a conglomerate of greater and smaller urban concentrations living in the same organism. In this conglomerate there are build and open spaces as well as urban growth and urban decline. This corresponds with present urban theory that turns the back on a concentric understanding of the urban; having a city center with a surrounding periphery. Instead a poly-nuclear approach where the urban world is a structure of enclaves connected through networks is found suitable (Nielsen 2001; Flusty and Dear 1999). In this paper I will introduce the concept of urban transformation as a term that is able to cover this relational aspect of contemporary urban growth and decline. Here the term urban transformation represents a more holistic approach that captures the different transformations occurring in contemporary urbanity, as the term deals with both growing and declining urban territories.

2. The Spatial Impact of Globalization

In the 1970s the once so mighty industrial countries were experiencing difficult times and due to structural changes in the economy, many industrial cities stopped growing and many inner cities began declining. This was not just a passing phase but became a long term period of de-industrialization. The manufacturing plants were getting more and more efficient, and the demand for heavy industries was no longer the same. On the contrary, new demands and technologies emerged that founded the basis for a new economy - creating a new world order.

A shift took place from an economy based on manufacturing, with principles like the assembly line and the blue-collar worker, towards a knowledge based economy focusing on white-collar workers and knowledge and service. Thus, in the late 1970s a new era of capitalism slowly emerged – the era of globalization. Apart from this general shift from manufacturing industry to knowledge based businesses, historical changes such as the 1970s oil crisis and the fall of the Berlin Wall (the fall of the iron curtain) have influenced the development. Finally, the development of IT and telecommunication technologies have made globalization the overall developmental guideline for contemporary societies.

This shift from manufacturing to service society, the rising demands for well-qualified labor and the opening up of free trade and finance have influenced the urban structures. A constant movement of population, jobs, and capital is going on which does not only include the growth of territories, but also the decay and abandonment of buildings and locations (Beauregard 1993). Among other things, old industrial sites and outskirt areas are facing economical problems while suffering from a decline in population whereas other regions and cities are becoming

high value nodal points. According to Hans Thor Andersen (2002: 95) the impact of globalization is an increased urban concentration, which has transformed the economy and the labor market to a polarized structure. This is not to say that globalization can be seen as a system that creates changes that are similar all over the globe but rather that globalization is a set of processes which are mixed with the localities and thus reflecting local, social, economic and political conditions (Andersen, 2002).

2.1 Global Cities

In addition to this Saskia Sassen (1991) talks about global cities to denote the fast growing city-regions. Sassen states that many major cities have a new strategic role as places for culture, economy etc. in the world's economy. This development has had a massive impact on both international economy and urban form. The main aspect for Sassen is that the "more globalized the economy becomes, the higher the agglomeration of central functions in relatively few sites, that is, the global cities" (Sassen 1991: 5).

Even though Saskia Sassen (1991) mainly talks about global growing city-regions, she also talks about how the growth of some cities or regions very much rests on the shrinkage of others.

"Prior to the current phase, there was high correspondence between major growth sectors and the overall national growth. Today we see increased asymmetry: the conditions promoting growth in global cities contain as significant components the decline of other areas of the United States, the United Kingdom, and Japan and the accumulation of government debt and corporate debt." (SASSEN. 1991: 12)

2.2 Sticky and Slippery Spaces

Another urban scholar that looks into the spatial effect of globalization is Steven Graham (2002). Stephen Graham (2002) talks about how some places strengthen their strategic roles and are becoming important high value centers of control, research and innovation in the global world, while other areas are left behind and only have lower value activities. The high value places Graham denotes as "Sticky Spaces", whereas he refers to the others as "Slippery Spaces". The "sticky spaces" are places like global financial centers such as New York, London and Tokyo, which are spaces for technological innovation (technopoles) and continuous innovation, and they are urban internet spaces producing creations for the internet and the digital industries (Graham 2002). These "sticky spaces" attract the well-educated workforce, because interesting high-tech jobs can be obtained. In the "sticky spaces" a concentration of jobs (particular highly skilled jobs), culture, growth and finances etc. can be found.

The lower value places are called “slippery spaces” and according to Graham, these places can be far away from contested concentration which, with help from the new technological network, makes routine transactions and flows to the rest of the world; they are named “call centre cities”. Another “slippery space” is “machine spaces” which are places that sell and produce machines to the internet (Graham 2002). Examples of these are peripheral cities, old industrial cities and cities in the developing world etc. Graham concludes that the “Sticky Spaces” are going to grow and maintain their position, whereas the future for the “slippery spaces” is much more problematic, because they can easily lose their industries. The kinds of industries placed in “slippery spaces” can easily be moved to other places with low income employees. The fact that the economy in the “slippery spaces” is based on low salaries alone is another problem.

This development into slippery and sticky spaces shows that the emerging technological landscape has an uneven geography, with a tendency for the big metropolitan cities to continue to grow and become completely dominating. This creates a fracture between the mega-poles and the surrounding areas which are left behind. Graham sees a need for rethinking: “[...] the relationship between so called global cities and the traditional idea of the hinterland” (Graham 2002: 121).

3. Growth and Decline in Relation

What the above mentioned conceptualization of contemporary urbanity indicates is an urban configuration of both growth and decline. Where the contemporary urban fabric can be characterized as a political-economical geography of both growth and decline, where, on the one hand, a demographical and economical concentration is happening, resulting in fast growing city-regions and, on the other hand, a de-concentration of other urban areas is taking place.

Both Sassen and Graham state that in some way or another growth and decline are connected. Growth and decline can be seen as an interactive organism characterized by an ever changing dynamic process between growth and decline. Thus, growth and decline cannot be designated as dichotomies but can rather be seen as two aspects of globalization, mutually depending on each other. This means that growth and shrinkage can be understood as a multidimensional bipolar process. Depending on the scale and scope of views, decline appears rather as an aspect of growth (or the flipside of growth). This development is most likely going to increase in the years to come, and it is not very probable that the bipolar character of shrinkage and growth will disappear (Federal Office for Building and Regional Planning 2006).

A way to describe this development is through seeing the urban landscape as a polarized map of both growth and decline where urban concentration and de-concentration processes are simultaneously creating an increased

polarization between the growing and declining areas, spatially, economically and demographically on a broad variety of scales. Thereby, shrinkage and growth co-exist side by side, on an overall global scale but moreover, the bipolar character of shrinkage and growth can also be observed within most countries and regions (Federal Office for Building and Regional Planning 2006). This shows that growth and decline are connected and relational: e.g. shrinkage can only be understood when seen in relation to something else (growth).

Regional geographers John Allen, Doreen Massey and Allan Cochrane look at this relational aspect of growth and decline in their book *Rethinking the Region* from 1998. The book looks at transformations in the southern part of England. This relational approach¹ is about understanding space and place “as constituted out of spatialized social relations” (Allen et al 1998: 2). Thereby, the authors argue “that “regions” only exist in relation to particular criteria” (Allen et al 1998: 2) and that certain conditions constitute a given region.

“The identities of regions are constructed through their relationship to “other” regions and naturally they come with a history in which they have already been “placed” so to speak”. (Allen et al 1998: 10)

Regions are part of a system in which they have a certain position, like a core region, a peripheral region, a manufacturing region, high-tech region or another type of region (Allen et al 1998: 10). All regions cannot be a core region, but yet again, a core region can only establish its ‘coreness’ in relation to other non-core regions (Allen et al 1998: 53).

Also Professor emeritus at Global Urban Research Unit, Newcastle University, Patsy Healey deals with the relational aspect of urbanism. Healey (2000: 517) talks about contemporary urbanism as being in a world of multiplex and globalized relationships. This relational approach focuses on the dynamic and relational and on processes rather than on objects, where urban areas are “...“driven” and “shaped” by different forces, interacting with each other in different ways, bypassing, conflicting, coordinating in complex trajectories” (Healey 2000: 526)

“Growth and decline feed off each other as households, businesses, and capital switch incessantly from one place to another in search of the “good life” and political and economic reward”. (Beauregard 1993: 21)

This means that there is a tension and a connection between concentration and decentralization on all scales, both on a local, national and international level, and it is difficult to separate the two processes. The closer analysis of current transformation processes shows that the overall decline happens in an extremely differentiated

way on a local scale, where growth and decline are situated close to each other. Looking at what could be considered an overall declining territory both growth and decline exist locally, and in that way growth and decline are interconnected. The same would be true in a generally growing area, where declining areas can also be found inside this growing territory. Thereby, territorial shrinkage occurs as a dynamic pattern of growth and decline rather than a coherent, regional condition (Ny Thisted Kommune & Realdania 2007).

4. Two stories of Growth and Decline

But how does the contemporary spatial configuration actually look like in real life? In order to figure that out I will now turn to the introducing of two examples being, respectively, the city of Berlin and the city of Shenzhen.

4.1 The Story of Berlin

Berlin is by many considered to be one of the most interesting capitals of Europe and is a very popular city to visit. In 2006 alone, 7 077 000 people visited Berlin to experience an exciting and interesting city (Berlin 2008).

With an interesting urban environment Berlin has a lot to offer to visitors and permanent inhabitants alike. Berlin is a city with history and heritage meeting you wherever you go: old and new historical monuments, interesting buildings, and lively city quarters. There are countless cafes and restaurants, traditional as well as more untraditional such as the beach bars along the river Spree. Furthermore, the city is very green and has many different green and open areas that function as recreational spaces for the city. All these spaces give room to a great cultural and ethnic diversity blending into a socially diverse urban environment that makes Berlin ever-changing and trendsetting. As an example of Berlin's trend setting status, Berlin has become the place young Danes flock to after finishing high school, to experience life on their own. Especially, the art and music scene in Berlin attracts many people.

The cultural life is pulsating and Berlin can be denoted a metropolis of art, culture and music. It has a vibrant art and music scene in a broad variety of genres from popular to underground music and art. It is in the forefront and can be considered an interesting experimenting cultural environment that many artists find attractive to live in, in order to be part of this dynamic cultural city. On top of that, the prices on accommodation are relatively low compared to other capital cities in Europe, which makes it affordable to settle down.

As an example of this focus on Berlin as an inspiring environment of art and culture, many Danish artists have discovered Berlin and entered the cultural scenes of that city. In order to support this, the Danish Embassy has

¹ This relational approach has roots in structuralism. Structuralism: "is a study method that generally claims that the true nature of things does not lie in the things themselves but in the relationship with other things (Nesbitt, Kate (ed) theorizing a new

started the initiative Berlinaut (Embassy of Denmark - Berlin 2008) in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Culture. Berlinaut is an initiative aiming at supporting Danish artists who have either settled down in Berlin or want to participate in the dynamic cultural life of Berlin. The purpose of this initiative is to contribute to the internationalization of Danish culture and art and by long-term network-strategies help professional Danish artists to establish themselves in Berlin or via Berlin (Embassy of Denmark - Berlin 2008).

Looking at the description above one could ask the question: Is Berlin one of Europe's hotspots, being a cultural capital with many offers to its inhabitants and visitors? To that I most certainly answer YES!

In relation to that the next question might be: Is Berlin also one of the European boomtowns with economical growth and progress? To that I can only answer NO!

On the contrary Berlin is denoted a Shrinking City by the German Shrinking Cities project, suffering from decline in economy (Oswalt 2004). This means that Berlin, on the one hand, is a city with many cultural, recreational and social qualities and on the other, it is a city with economical problems. And that in spite of the fact that the German Government has made a lot of investments in Berlin since the reunification of Germany in 1989, when Berlin again became the capital of Germany.

But the reconstruction of Berlin as a new growth center with massive investments and the building of housing and office space have not had the desired effect. The city has not yet become a growth centre and the odds for being so seem against it.

Berlin has a very high unemployment rate with 277 211 persons (16, 5%) without job and an average income on 1 500 Euro in 2006 creating a low tax base (Berlin 2008). This high unemployment rate stands in stark contrast to other German cities. E.g. Frankfurt am Main, which is one of the leading financial centers of Europe, has only a total number of 37 217 unemployed persons in 2006 (Frankfurt 2008). This makes it obviously very difficult for Berlin to compete on economical issues. And the economical problems of Berlin are evidenced by the fact that there is a lot of free office space, many of the newly constructed buildings are standing empty and there are areas which have fallen into disrepair and are in a very bad state, mostly in the former east-German part of Berlin.

The story told about Berlin is a story about contrasts. These contrasts make it difficult to determine whether it is a positive or negative picture we have to paint of Berlin. But one thing is for sure, growth and decline seem to be

interrelated and whether a city is growing or declining is not that easy to determine or at least we have to be very specific in how to define a shrinking or growing city.

4.2 The Story of Shenzhen

In order to emphasize the relation between growth and decline I would like to tell yet another short story. This is the story of Shenzhen which can be characterized as the opposite story of Berlin.

Shenzhen is one of the fastest growing cities in the world and can be denoted the powerhouse of China. It is the place where investors want to place their businesses and production plants and the growth is rapid. Overnight high rise buildings are planned and almost also constructed. The city of Shenzhen has a record of being the place where buildings are constructed in the fastest way (Craciun 2001: 209). And it has to go fast, because the goal is to create more profit than already achieved and in doing so the buildings constructed have to be bigger, better and taller than the ones built yesterday.

Shenzhen is situated in the Pearl River Delta, in southern China's Guangdong province near Hong Kong, and the speed in which the city has expanded is unbelievable. In just a few decades the city has experienced an enormous industrial activity and rapid population growth. People move to Shenzhen to get a small piece of the cake and take part in this boom. In 1980 there were only 30,000 inhabitants in an area of 10 square kilometers (Craciun 2001; 119), and from being a small village Shenzhen has transformed into a vibrant metropolis, with 8.4643 million permanent residents by the end of 2006 (Shenzhen Government Online 2008). Shenzhen is defined and spoken of as a city, but with a total area of 1,952.84 square kilometers² (Shenzhen Government Online 2008) it might better be seen as one big urban metropolis or region (in comparison, the area of Berlin is 892 square kilometers (Berlin 2008)).

It is a city of sprawl - developing out into the countryside. Furthermore, it is a city of tabula rasa, which means that everything is removed which is not considered useful in the hunt for profit. It is more or less free to build whatever the investor wants to build in the name of development. Shenzhen is planned as a linear city based on a grid of infrastructure which is found suitable to organize the flows of capital (Craciun 2001: 123).

The Stock Exchange Index is skyrocketing (Craciun 2001) and the economy is booming. This boom has happened due to a certain economical zoning status. Shenzhen is one of the Chinese Special Economic Zones (SEZ), established in 1979 as the first SEZ. In the 1970s the communist party in China led by Deng Xiaoping liberalized the economy of China, making it possible for commerce, production and technology to grow between

² Within Shenzhen the size of the special economic zone is 395.81 square kilometres ; in 2006 the SEZ was visited by 378 million people, and 110 million vehicles passed through the city's various checkpoints (Shenzhen Government Online 2008)

China and the western world in specific zones – the SEZs – thus creating what could be denoted market based communism. This has created wealth in China, and especially the communist party has gained economically from this arrangement.

The question whether Shenzhen is a growing and booming city is not difficult to answer, that can be done by a simple YES!

But whether Shenzhen is a nice place to live with a good environment for its inhabitants becomes immediately more difficult to answer with a yes.

Due to the growth in Shenzhen, among other places, a new Chinese middle-class is emerging which is experiencing improved living conditions and economical wealth. But the majority of the Chinese people are still living without the fulfillment of basic needs and rights. They work many hours at a very low wage, have poor living conditions and overall, they can be described as the losers of this massive growth. Furthermore, this boomtown has a huge “floating” population, which means that former peasants and workers from inland provinces are living temporarily in Shenzhen without permit (Craciun 2001). These people who leave their hometown to work at the productions plants and construction sites are living in poor conditions in buildings where many are sharing small rooms, without light, sanity etc. and they only visit their families in the countryside once a year or less.

On top of that, the basic necessities in Shenzhen are undersupplied. The infrastructure, the sewer system and the power system cannot follow the pace of the construction of buildings. Furthermore, the shortage of cheap housing is enormous. The obsession with expansion and growth creates an imbalance between the oversupplied commodity buildings and the undersupplied basic necessities, making it obvious that the city is developing on the terms of capital rather than responding to the needs of the population (Craciun 2001: 243).

The story of Shenzhen is therefore one of a booming metropolis with high growth rates where people and capital are flowing to the city. Investors from Western countries consider China and specifically Shenzhen the place where everything is happening. It is here they have to invest because China is such a big market. But the flipside of this development is the bad living conditions for the man in the street. There are low wages, no rights and very bad housing facilities and we might ask the question: is this kind of growing city something to aim for? The answer is ambiguous.

5. Urban Transformation

The two stories of Berlin and Shenzhen highlight the phenomenon of urban growth and decline and the stark relation between the two. It is, most certainly, not an unambiguous or simple story the two places tell us, even though Berlin and Shenzhen are denoted to be respectively declining and growing. On the contrary, the two stories tell us that both growing and declining areas contain both positive and negative conditions, structures and stories. It is the relation between a long row of either growing or declining factors and structures that together constitute a specific urban territory, the conception of it and its story. In general, a positive narrative is connected with growth and expansion whereas decline is connected with collapse and decay – growth expands whereas decline shrinks the narrative possibilities (Beauregard 2005). Thus, it is a much more nuanced picture Berlin and Shenzhen tell us. Growth is not only positive as shown in the example from Shenzhen and decline is not only negative as the Berlin example shows. Thereby, Berlin and Shenzhen give reason for questioning whether it is possible to look at growth and decline separately.

Therefore, it seems fruitful to introduce the term urban transformation that more holistically looks at the relational aspects of growth and decline; making it possible to obtain a much more nuanced picture of the phenomenon being studied. Here urban transformation can be considered to be a concept that extends the discussion including both growth and decline; where growth and decline should rather be considered dynamic relational phenomena depending on multiple developments e.g. at the political, socio-cultural, economical or technical level (cf. ARCHIS 2004). This means that there are bigger and smaller territories suffering from shrinkage and bigger and smaller areas experiencing growth.

The term urban transformation is all inclusive and captures the relational aspect by both containing growth *and* decline. Urban transformation is a term that includes both urbanization and de-urbanization that is urban growth as well as negative urban development. Thereby, the term urban transformation is dynamic and changeable and the character of the term seems to be appropriate in relation to the increased, differentiated urban development taking place. I think urban transformation suggests a more network-oriented approach, which captures the fact that a greater transformation is happening which requires a differentiated and nuanced investigation. Urban transformation is often used as a term to cover physical transformation of urban areas within the urban fabric, previously used for other purposes. In this context, urban transformation is seen as covering both this traditional understanding of transforming something by design and also the fact that the urban always is transforming and changing character, emphasizing the continuous change of urban growth and urban decline.

5.1 Urban transformation and urban mutation

Thus, the term urban transformation is chosen because the urban fabric is not a static unit remaining the same. On the contrary, the urban is ever changeable and continues to mutate into new forms.

Adjunct Professor of Architecture at Columbia University Graham Shane (2005) considers the urban as being a mutating organism, like Ignasi de Solà Morales (1996). They define the city as being a mutated organism - an organ that is alive and transforming. Shane formulates this in the following lines:

"Seeking increased efficiency, profit, or pleasure, urban actors splice together urban structures that handle urban flows, producing new settings for their activities or reusing old ones for altered circumstances." (Shane 2005: 6).

By using their conception, the shrinkage of some places is just one aspect of such an urban mutation. Shane sees this as an expanded field which "comprises sparsely populated landscapes as well as hyper dense, global city nodes" (Shane 2005: 11). This means that we need new strategies and tactics that can cope with the hybrid patchwork of contemporary urbanism (Shane 2005: 11).

The way Solà Morales (1996) sees the changes happening in contemporary urbanity is as a mutation in the cells of the city. The idea of Solà Morales is often related to the rapidly growing megapoles where this growth is uncontrollable. However, this mutation has the potential to result in both cities that grow rapidly and in cities that become left-over and shrink.

"A casual, random change in the cell's genetic material produces alterations in one or more inherited characteristics, provoking a break in the mechanisms of heredity: a mutation is produced; a substantial alteration affecting both the morphology and the physiology, not only of the cell or the organ but of the entire organism." (Solà Morales 1996: 12)

This means that the urban is an ever changing organism; therefore it is possible to argue that the contemporary spatial configuration is different from e.g. the spatial configuration of the industrial era. This has made many formerly thriving industrial regions superfluous, with stagnation or decline as a result. An example is the United States which during the last decades has experienced a rather dramatic reshuffling during which the Rustbelt cities experienced decline, whereas the Sunbelt cities were growing. Thus, spatial configuration is an ever transforming urbanity that is permanent temporarily; this means that cities are permanent for a specific period following which they transform, often due to a reorganization of capitalism. Thereby, changes will happen - just time defines how long we are in a certain period and we have to plan for transformation.

The urban is thereby transforming without any consideration of the past or of other values, and often this mutation happens so fast that it is impossible to either analyze or intervene in the process. We nevertheless have to try to do both, and according to Solá Morales this emphasizes a need for working with open interactive morphologies.

"To design mutation, to introduce oneself into its centrifugal energy, ought to involve at once the design of the public and the private space, of mobility and of specialized sites, of the organism as a whole and of the individual elements." (Solá Morales 1996: 14)

5.2 Different Urban Transformation Scenarios

What the two examples of Berlin and Shenzhen also tell us is that planning and urban design must generally be able to cope with different urban transformation scenarios, regardless of whether a territory is growing or declining. Berlin and Shenzhen show us that urban decline and urban growth are complex multiple scale conditions that occur locally with different spatial, social and cultural characteristics. It therefore is necessary to talk about planning solutions that are prepared to look at the specific needs, characteristics and potential of a given territory. In relation to this the German architectural bureau Urban Catalyst (2003), run by architects Klaus Overmeyer, Philipp Oswalt and Philipp Misselwitz, talks about planning that is able to deal with changing situations, that can be applied quickly, and that does not need major investments, but has the ability to establish synergy between the different stakeholders and the existing resources (Urban Catalyst 2003). Thus, as Berlin and Shenzhen show, it is not only important to look at the physical side but also to include social, cultural and economical issues. Hereby, the role of the planner is to moderate between cultural activities, political-economical structures, physical structures and the social capital of the given space.

In the growing areas the challenge lies in understanding and handling the processes of urban growth including rising house prices, traffic jams and pollution. On the contrary, the challenges in the declining areas are the understanding and handling of, among other things, the surplus of built structures, the social and economical problems and the negative identity linked to being declining, shrinking and decaying.

For the territories that undergo negative urban development, the goal of renewed growth does not at first sight seem to be attainable. But instead of only thinking negatively about this lack of growth, the urban transformation that is happening could be seen as a chance to create and come up with alternatives to traditional planning and to re-think the present urban design and planning principle. Berlin exemplifies that a living urban environment is not necessarily related to growth. As mentioned, Berlin is a city in decline, but it is interesting because it has a number of other elements, such as social diversity and physical appeal with cultural heritage and landscape values, that can be included in the planning and storytelling of Berlin. The positive aspects that Berlin has, confirm

that growth is not the only guiding principle when we are planning our urban areas. This could be coined in Cathrin Bauer's expression: "stabilization rather than expansion and better rather than bigger" (Cathrin Bauer quoted in Beauregard 1993: 88). Thereby a third model of stabilization emerges, which stands between growth and decline. This stabilization model seems to deal with issues like urban quality, the everyday life of the citizens, sustainability and good livable environment etc.; the Berlin case shows that these are important issues to have as planning goals in order to make habitable and vibrant cities.

6. Summary

In recent years a new shift in economy has happened, moving from the industrial economy to a global knowledge based economy which also influences the urban fabric. The global society seems to engender a contemporary urbanity consisting of both growing areas *and* declining areas. Since the 1970s factors like globalization and deindustrialization have activated a restructuring of the urban fabric, producing both growing and declining urban areas. Parallel with these changes deregulations of the public administration toward an increased neo-liberalization have taken place, contributing to increased polarization.

Thus, the emergence of a hybrid condition of growth *and* decline is not something new; however, the interesting and important thing is that an increased reorganization of the urban into growing city regions and declining areas is occurring. The German architecture critic and writer Wolfgang Kil is certain that we will experience more enormous, unpredictable changes in the next 10 to 20 years (Karssenbergh 2007). These changes will derive from an intensified globalization and the increased concentration into hot spots of economic success where the market is and not where politicians may decide that a place is suitable for a certain business or not. (Karssenbergh, 2007).

Furthermore, the investigations of this paper have contributed with the conclusion that growth and decline enter into a dynamic relationship - this relational aspect is important to understand when trying to figure out what contemporary urbanity looks like. Growth and decline enter into a multidimensional, bipolar process where urban concentration and de-concentration processes appear. This means that growth and decline co-exists at a multiple range of scales. In order to grasp this development I have introduced to term of urban transformation that seem to capture this dynamic patchwork of growth and decline. Here the term urban transformation is considered to be a holistic term; appropriate in relation to the increased, differentiated urban development taking place in contemporary urbanity.

7. List of Literature

Allen, John; Massey, Doreen and, Cochrane, Allan (1998) *Rethinking the Region*, London: Routledge

Andersen, Hans Thor (2002) *Globalisation, spatial polarization and the housing market*, Geografisk Tidsskrift, Danish Journal of Geography, No. 102, 2002, <http://rdgs.dk/djg/pdfs/102/1/08.pdf>, p93-102

ARCHIS (2004) *ARCHIS is shrinking*, Amsterdam: Artimo, No. 1

Beauregard, Robert A. (1993) *Voices of Decline – the Postwar Fate of U.S. Cities*. Oxford: Blackwell

Craciun, Mihai (2001) *Ideology – Shenzhen*, in Chung, Chuihua Judy, Inaba, Jeffery, Koolhaas, Rem and Leong, Sze Tsung (ed) (2001) *Project on the City – Great Leap Forward*, Köln: Taschen

Dyer, Alan (1991) *Decline and Growth in English Towns 1400 – 1640*, London: Macmillan Education

Federal Office for Building and Regional Planning (2006) *Growing and shrinking regions in Europe*, Research News No 2/ September 2006

Flusty, Steven and Dear, Michael (1999) *Invitation to a Postmodern Urbanism*, in Body-Gendrot, Sophie N. and Beauregard, Robert A. (ed) *The urban Moment: Cosmopolitan Essays on the late-20th-Century*, London: Sage Publications. Inc, chapter 2

Graham, Stephen (2002) *Urban Network Architecture and the Structuring of Future Cities*, in: Thomsen, Henning (2002) (ed.) *Future Cities – The Copenhagen Lectures*, Copenhagen: Fonden Realdania, pp. 110-122.

Healey, Patsy (2000) *Planning in Relational Space and Time: Responding to New Urban Realities*, in Bridge, Gary and Watson, Sophie (ed) (2000) *A Companion to the City*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., chapter 43 517-530

Karssenbergh, Hans (2007) *Wolfgang Kil: The Shrinking City*, Interview with Wolfgang Kil, March 28th 2007, www.erasmuspc.com, , accessed November 25th 2007

Nielsen, Tom (2001) *Formløst – den moderne bys overskudslandskaber*, Aarhus: Arkitektskolens Forlag

Ny Thisted & Realdania (2006) *Ny Dynamik i Danmarks yderområder*, conference report Landdistrikter og Landsbyer, Hanstholm, 1.-2. June 2006.

Oswalt, Philipp (ed)(2004) *Schrumpfende Städte I - Internationale Untersuchung*. Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz Verlag

Sassen, Saskia (2001) *The Global City – New York, London, Tokyo*. Oxford: Princeton University Press

Shane, David Graham (2005) *Recombinant Urbanism – Conceptual Modelling in Architecture, Urban Design, and City Theory*, Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd

Solá-Morales, Ignasi de (1996) *Present and Futures. Architecture in Cities*, Barcelona: ACTAR

Urban Catalyst (ed.) (2003) *Urban Catalysts*. Accessible at: http://www.urban-os.com/think-pool/attach/download/1_UC_finalR_synthesis.pdf?object_id=4272&attachment_id=4276 Accessed March 14th 2006

Webpages

Berlin, Zahlen und Fakten (source Amt für Statistik Berlin-Brandenburg (English: State Statistical Institute Berlin-Brandenburg)), <http://www.berlin.de/berlin-im-ueberblick/zahlenfakten/index.de.html>, accessed July 5th 2008

Embassy of Denmark - Berlin, Berlinaut, www.berlinaut.um.dk/da/Berlinaut.htm., accessed July 5th 2008

Frankfurt, Statistics, [www.frankfurt.de/sixcms/detail.php?id=437171&ffmpar\[_id_inhalt\]=258869](http://www.frankfurt.de/sixcms/detail.php?id=437171&ffmpar[_id_inhalt]=258869), accessed July 10th 2008

Shenzhen Government Online, Overview, <http://english.sz.gov.cn/gi/>, accessed October 14th 2008

Conference Topic: 1 Planning Theory

Keywords: urban transformation, relational approach, urban design, spatial polarization, uneven spatial geography